

KURI KINTON (chestnuts in potato paste)

栗きんとん



A New Year's treat throughout Japan, chestnuts simmered in sugar syrup with their golden color enhanced by *kuchinashi no mi* (dried gardenia pods), are tossed with mashed sweet potato, also color-enhanced with gardenia pods. You can find bottles of *kuri no kanro ni* (chestnuts in sweet syrup) at Asian groceries. *Satsuma imo*, the red-skinned, yellow-fleshed tuber that is boiled and mashed are also sold at many Asian groceries... and increasingly at local produce markets, even supermarkets, in many parts of the world.



栗の甘露煮
Kuri no Kanro Ni
(chestnuts in sweet syrup)



さつまいも
Satsuma imo
(sweet potato)

Makes 8-10 portions.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 small bottle (about 8 chestnuts) *kuri no kanro ni* (yellow chestnuts in syrup)
- 1 large *satsuma imo* (red-skinned, yellow sweet potato), about 400 grams/18 oz
- 1/4 teaspoon *yaki myoban* (alum; a powder used to hold color)
- 1 *kuchinashi no mi* (dried gardenia pod); cracked [[see glossary at end of recipe]]
- 2 tablespoons cane sugar
- 2 tablespoons reserved chestnut syrup
- 1 tablespoon *mirin* (syrupy rice wine); optional

PROCEDURE:

Rinse the potato, then cut it into thick circles or chunks. Peel away the skin thickly. (Peels can be made into sweet potato fries and finished with coarse salt or made into *daigaku imo*, fried potatoes, glazed with honey and topped with black sesame).

Dissolve *yaki myoban* (alum powder) in enough cold water in a bowl to cover the potato pieces. Let sit for at least 10 minutes, and up to 12 hours covered in the refrigerator. Drain and rinse, just before using.



In a pan large enough to hold the potato pieces in a single layer, place the cracked gardenia pod. Fill the pan with enough cold water to barely cover the potato pieces. Bring the water to a boil (it will turn a vivid yellow color) and cook the potatoes until tender (test with a skewer), about 10 minutes.



Drain and mash the potatoes through an *uragoshi* (horsehair net stretched over a wooden frame to make a sieve; below left) or metal sieve (below, right).



In a separate pot, combine the sieved potatoes with the sugar. Drain the chestnuts, letting the syrup drip into the paste. Stir to remove any lumps before heating. Place pan over low heat and cook, stirring constantly to prevent scorching, until thick, aromatic and glossy.





Add additional syrup or *mirin* (syrupy rice wine) as needed to adjust flavor and texture. The final texture should be that of tomato paste (the mixture will thicken slightly as it cools). In the final few moments of cooking, add the whole chestnuts and stir to distribute. Allow the mixture to cool in the pan. Serve at room temperature, or chilled.

Sweet potato peels are often cut into slivers and deep fried, then tossed in honey or a sugar syrupy, and eaten as a snack, called *Daigaku Imo* (“University Potatoes”)



GLOSSARY:



ABOVE: brands of KUCHINASHI NO MI (dried gardenia pods)
BELOW: brands of YAKI MYOBAN (alum)

